

Random play: toying with computer games and reality TV



Strand
Media

Purpose

Students create and analyse two of the most popular contemporary media forms — computer games and reality television. They engage with these highly constructed environments and explore the relationship between these forms and the audiences that engage with the multimedia and cross-media experiences they offer.

Overview

Activities in this module are designed to promote student-centred learning using four sequential phases.

Phase	Media Strand — The Arts
Phase 1 — Enter the game zone!	Students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • examine the genres of computer games • analyse and compare computer games.
Phase 2 — Who's in control?	Students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • research the players and sites of electronic games • produce marketing for a game concept.
Phase 3 — Press play	Students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • design and create a board/computer game • present a pitch to the class about their game.
Phase 4 — Reality TV or just another game people play?	Students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyse reality TV programs and their relationship with other media genres and forms • develop a concept for a reality TV program.

Using this module

Focus and links

This module outlines suggestions for planning, teaching and assessing using core learning outcomes and core content from the *Years 1 to 10 The Arts Syllabus*. *Random play* presents one way of planning with the core learning outcomes and may be adapted to suit the particular context of a school.

Activities also contribute to learning in the areas of literacy, numeracy, lifeskills and a futures perspective and can be used for gathering evidence about students' development in these cross-curricular priorities.

Tasks in this module promote literacy in a number of ways. Students are involved with code breaking when they decode and encode images, text and sounds in computer games, and conventions used in reality television. They engage as a text participant when they comprehend and compose game environments, new concepts and narrative forms. They operate as a text user when they examine the purposes of these media forms and use media texts for different cultural and social functions, such as following technology processes to create a game. When students examine how media industries position them with cross-media promotion, they are operating as text analysts.

Aspects of numeracy are included in multimedia design when the student must consider perspective, size, shape, distance and space in the construction of three-dimensional environments. A futures perspective in the activities encourages students to consider possible and probable forms that may emerge for computer games and audience interaction with the texts as well as implications of artificial intelligence and virtual reality.

Lifeskills included are personal development skills, social skills and self-management skills. These skills are developed when students engage in collaborative practical tasks, group discussions, oral and visual presentations to the class, and individual creative projects.

Some students with physical, hearing or vision impairment may need assistance with some of these activities. Several activities involving screen viewing may need to be modified for students with severe vision impairment to enable them to engage in and demonstrate the core learning outcomes. Consider developments in technology that enable students with vision impairment to experience multimedia through auditory feedback and tactile responses, and experience film and digital television through with audio description. Obtain advice from their support teachers and seek web sites that contain information about new developments, such as <http://www.nib.org.uk/wedo/services/homevid/welcome.htm>

Module organisation

The sessions do not correspond to lessons, which means that the teacher can plan media activities in shorter or longer extended timeframes as is most appropriate to the timetable.

Prior learning

To devise a unit of work appropriate for their class, teachers will need to consider students':

- prior learning in the five concepts that form the core content in Media (see core content, *Years 1 to 10 The Arts Syllabus*, pages 52–53)
- skills relating to collaboration and group work
- skills in technological processes involved in video production
- analysis skills when responding to media texts.

Evaluation of a unit of work

After completion of units of work developed from this module, collect information and make judgments about:

- teaching strategies and activities used to progress student learning towards demonstrations of core learning outcomes
- opportunities provided to gather evidence about students' demonstrations of core learning outcomes
- future learning opportunities for students who have not yet demonstrated the core learning outcomes
- the extent to which activities matched needs of particular groups of students and reflected equity considerations
- the appropriateness of time allocations for particular activities
- the appropriateness of resources used.

Information from this evaluation process can be used to plan subsequent units of work so that they build on, and support, student learning. The evaluated units of work may also be adapted prior to their reuse. For further information, refer to the 'Curriculum evaluation' section in the sourcebook guidelines.

Core learning outcomes

This module focuses on the following core learning outcomes from the Media strand of the *Years 1 to 10 The Arts Syllabus*.

Level statement: Level 6

Students design and produce media in a range of commercial and non-commercial contexts. They make considered decisions about the design, selection, combination and manipulation of media languages and technologies to produce meanings.

Students understand the role the audience plays in media creation as they promote media products to various audiences and consider the many meanings a text can convey.

Students examine the contexts surrounding media creation and the influences that shape the production, distribution and consumption of media.

- ME 6.1 Students apply an understanding of media languages and technologies to design and create media texts in a range of production contexts.
- ME 6.2 Students apply industry strategies to promote a specific media text to various audiences.
- ME 6.3a Students evaluate how contextual influences can contribute to personal interpretations of media.
- ME 6.3b Students evaluate social, political and economic influences operating on the production of public, commercial and independent media.

Core content

This module provides a learning context for the following core content from Level 6 of the syllabus in addition to the core content from previous levels:

- | | |
|--|---|
| media languages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • intertextuality • montage • symbolic codes • multi-layered sound • subtitles |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – still and moving images – sounds – words | |
| media technologies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consider continuity • adopt production roles • market |
| audience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • multiple meanings in texts • fan culture • censorship • audiences as active producers of meaning |
| institution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • artistic expression • commercial appeal • community service • government, commercial, community and independent • political and economic contexts • regulation, ownership and ethics |
| representation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access • alternative representations • self-representation |

Assessment

The following table provides examples of opportunities in this module for gathering evidence and making judgments about student demonstrations of The Arts core learning outcomes. When making an on-balance judgment about demonstrations of the learning outcomes, consider all the points in the 'Making judgments' column. The table is neither exhaustive nor mandatory. Assessment opportunities should be negotiated with students to maximise their demonstrations of these outcomes in a variety of ways. Reflect with students on evidence gathered to make judgments about their demonstrations.

Outcomes	Gathering evidence	Making judgments
<p>ME 5.1 Students construct and reconstruct meaning through the application of languages and technologies in the design and production of media texts.</p> <p>ME 6.1 Students apply an understanding of media languages and technologies to design and create media texts in a range of production contexts.</p>	<p>Students may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compile a game design document with design elements and visual representation of screen environments • incorporate practical research of different forms and technologies, and experiment with using these to target their preferred audiences in the design stage • create work-in-progress documents — concept outlines, treatments, website architectures, screen and button designs, character profiles, copyright requests, and document the planning and design process in a log/diary • workshop/experiment/ rehearse different aspects of language, e.g. intertextuality, montage, symbolic codes, multi-layered sound, and apply technology concepts such as adopting production roles and consideration of market • incorporate a reflective process that involves production meetings to discuss and modify/rework aspects of design and production to achieve a desired effect and level of interaction • work individually or collaboratively on design or production aspects such as graphic design or sound recorder/mixer. <p>The teacher may use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • peer- and self-assessment • focused analysis <p>recorded in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • journal/workshop checklist • game design document • criteria sheet. 	<p>Level 5 When designing and creating, do students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apply their knowledge and skills in available technologies to design and produce texts in particular media forms, such as electronic games or television programs? • apply the features of a multimedia program to construct game environments? • apply their knowledge of particular conventions when creating concepts and utilising equipment during the production of texts? • manipulate images with a software paint program, a vision mixer or other special effects? • appropriate images, words and sounds from videos, websites, CDs and magazines? • create headlines, captions and written pieces to produce particular perspectives about games? <p>Level 6 When designing and creating, do students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • incorporate practical research of different forms and technologies and experiment with using these to target their preferred audiences before starting production? • engage in a planning and design process before producing their texts? • manipulate the languages and utilise the potential of the technologies? • refine and re-edit their work to produce the desired effect and level of interactivity? • operate effectively individually or in collaborative production contexts? • transfer their understanding of languages and technologies from one media form to another?

Outcomes	Gathering evidence	Making judgments
<p>ME 5.2 Students emulate industry practices to promote, deliver and exhibit media texts in a range of contexts.</p> <p>ME 6.2 Students apply industry strategies to promote a specific media text to various audiences.</p>	<p>Students may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> simulate commercial promotional campaign practices including audience research and publicity strategies to promote their computer game/reality program to diverse groups of people. <p>Students may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> present a pitch to promote a game concept design cross-media marketing campaigns create introductory sequences and websites. <p>The teacher may use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> student–teacher consultation peer and self-assessment focused analysis <p>recorded in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> folio student feedback sheets written report checklist. 	<p>Level 5 When creating their promotional campaign, do students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> use industry strategies such as web site to promote a text to a range of audiences? present their texts in a range of contexts? use a range of media forms, including print, online and broadcast? adopt industry roles and responsibilities when collaborating? exhibit behaviour and skills that are consistent with the industry role? attract a viewer’s/player’s interest or attention by selecting and incorporating a variety of technical codes appropriate to the medium of games or TV? design publicity material that will appeal to the target audience and entice them to attend the exhibition? use industry strategies such as pitch and promotional material to promote their text? <p>Level 6 When creating their promotional campaign, do students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> apply cross-media strategies to promote an electronic game or reality TV program? consider the demographics of the target group when choosing industry strategies? select an appropriate strategy to market a text to a target audience and justify the selection?
<p>ME 5.3a Students research and analyse various media representations within their cultural and historical contexts.</p> <p>ME 6.3a Students evaluate how contextual influences can contribute to personal interpretations of media.</p>	<p>Students may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify media forms and technologies that shape the production, distribution and consumption of computer games evaluate how social, political, historical, technical and cultural influences contribute to personal interpretations of games or reality TV. <p>The teacher may use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> student–teacher consultation including discussion and questioning teacher observation focused analysis <p>recorded in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> student journal checklists. 	<p>Level 5 When evaluating contextual influences, do students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> examine the contexts surrounding the creation of games and reality television? analyse the way ‘real’ people and experiences are constructed by reality television? deconstruct the use of media languages in the representation, such as symbolic codes, intertextual references, editing and soundtrack? deconstruct the literal and symbolic levels of meaning constructed in particular game texts? analyse the representation of environments, characters and experiences within the contexts of game playing? <p>Level 6 When evaluating contextual influences, do students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> evaluate how contextual influences diversely affect the interpretation of games and reality television programs? reflect on their interpretations and identify the influences that have contributed to it? consider why games and reality TV are popular with audiences and justify their opinions? evaluate the role of interaction with texts as a popular feature of games and reality TV? deconstruct the visual interpretation within the context of the time in history it is developed, the industry culture within which it is developed or received and the society’s values and beliefs?

Outcomes	Gathering evidence	Making judgments
<p>ME 5.3b Students research and examine the media institutions that are involved in the production, distribution and exhibition of the media they consume as audiences.</p> <p>ME 6.3b Students evaluate social, political and economic influences operating on the production of public, commercial and independent media.</p>	<p>Students may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • play/view and discuss a range of computer games and reality TV programs and analyse the contextual factors that impact on their production and reception • evaluate the impact of these influences on computer game and reality TV production. <p>The teacher may use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teacher observation • focused analysis <p>recorded in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student's media diary • criteria sheets • checklists. 	<p>Level 5 When evaluating influences, do students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • research information from primary and secondary sources, including media texts, corporate publications, industry publications and historical records? • identify the factors impacting on production and reception of computer games and reality TV programs and describe the influences of these factors? • examine the competition between major production companies and its effects, justifying the viewpoints taken? <p>Level 6 When evaluating influences, do students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • investigate the social, political and economic influences operating on the production of computer games and TV programs, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – market competition/sales – censorship regulations – programming and ratings – production costs – cross-media marketing potential? • evaluate the type and degree of influence of these factors on the production of games and reality TV? • present these evaluations with substantiating evidence?

Background information

Computer games and reality TV are two of the most popular media forms available today, and as products of creative and economically powerful industries, they deserve critical attention. In this module, students have opportunities to express ideas using the language of these forms. This gives students access to new technologies and forms for creative expression as well as developing their ability to be critical of these texts and the contexts surrounding their production and consumption. The whole concept of reality and how these forms construct particular realities can be examined.

After gaining insights into their construction, students are better equipped to investigate the visual construction of the screens for computer games, the navigational tools and their application of traditional narrative features. The burgeoning games industry in Queensland and the related industries that support the State's film industry means skills in this area offer students potential career pathways. Some of the skills employed in game construction are applicable to technological applications of 3D modelling now being adopted in many industries.

Some games contain characters which have their cultural identity linked with negative attributes, such as an evil demeanour or stupidity. These games can be used to generate discussion about the misunderstandings that underlie these stereotypical representations. Be sensitive of students or their family members who have similar cultural backgrounds. Students will gain from discussions about the view of the world underlying the representations of worlds in computer games and reality television.

Terminology

Students have opportunities to become familiar with and use the following terminology in this module:

arcade	interactivity	narrative structure	reality TV
artificial intelligence	interface	navigation	shareware
cheats	intertextuality	non-playable	simulation
console	java script	characters	sound file
cross-marketing	LANs	physical modelling	teaser
cross-media	list serve	pitch	trailer
demographic	modem	platform	virtual reality
filmic language	multiplayer	POV	voice activation
icon	music samples	'power ups'	

School authority policies

Be aware of and observe school authority policies that may be relevant to this module. Education Queensland policies on health and safety considerations for Media can be found at www.education.qld.gov.au/corporate/doem/sindex/m-ind.htm.

For policies and guidelines for the Catholic sector, refer to the Queensland Catholic Education Commission website at www.qcec.qld.catholic.edu.au/www/index.cfm.

Equity considerations

This module provides opportunities for students to increase their understanding and appreciation of equity and diversity within a supportive environment. It includes activities that encourage students to:

- work individually or in groups when creating texts
- value diversity of abilities, opinions and experiences when critiquing
- support one another's efforts in the design or production phases
- develop a critical awareness of the dominance of certain cultures and gender constructions
- become empowered to make discerning viewing and playing decisions.

It is important that these equity considerations inform decision making about teaching strategies, classroom organisation and assessment.

Support materials and references

The following resources provide strong background information and materials for this module and may also be helpful additions to your professional library. Review material before facilitating student access.

Information relating to copyright issues can be found at the Australian Copyright Council's, *Online Information Centre* at www.copyright.org.au/index.htm. Please note the licence conditions that apply to downloading and printing information sheets from this site.

Print

Mhando, M. 2001, 'Big Brother: Conniving Lives as Public Events — The Spectre of Reality', *Australian Screen Education*, Issue 28, Summer, ATOM, Melbourne.

Poole, S. 2000, *Trigger Happy*, Fourth Estate, London.

Stewart, C. & Kowaltzke, A. 1997, *Media: New Ways and Meanings*, Jacaranda Wiley, Milton.

Wells, C. and Tibaldi, K. 2001, 'A Unit of Work on Reality Television', *Australian Screen Education*, Issue 28, Summer, ATOM, Melbourne.

Electronic

Websites

(All websites listed were accessed in February 2002)

Images/clip art

www.dgl.microsoft.com/

Buttons

http://www.hotwww.com/hotwww/gallery/free_graphics/buttons/but_pagethree.htm

http://www.hotwww.com/hotwww/gallery/free_graphics/buttons/but_pagefour.htm

Backgrounds

<http://www.windyweb.com/design/gallery/buttons.htm>

<http://windyweb.com/cgi-bin/imageFolio.cgi?direct=Backgrounds>

<http://smorgasbord.net/webmaster/gallery/bg/background.shtml>

<http://www.windyweb.com/design/gallery/backgrounds.htm>

Sound files

<http://licorice-n-lace.virtualave.net/music/poprock.html>

http://www.geocities.com/Wellesley/1089/sound_bytes.html

Java script

<http://www.jsworld.com/>

<http://webdeveloper.earthweb.com/webjs/>

<http://javascript.internet.com/>

<http://www.infohiway.com/javascript/indexf.htm>

Guestbook

<http://www.dreambook.com/>

<http://guest.onecenter.com/>

Counter

<http://oxcounter.com/index2.html>

Web page development

<http://www.webattack.com/Freeware/webpublish/fweditors.shtml>

http://thefreesite.com/Free_Software/HTML_freeware/index.html

Reality TV

<http://bigbrother.iprimus.com.au/>

<http://www.sirlinksalot.net/realitytelevision.html>

Templates

<http://smorgasbord.net/webmaster/gallery/buttons/button.shtml>

http://www.hotwww.com/hotwww/gallery/free_graphics/buttons/but_pageone.htm

Activities

Phase 1 — Enter the game zone!

Students:

- examine the genres of games
- analyse and compare computer games with other media forms of interactivity.

Outcomes	Media activities	Gathering evidence
<p>ME 6.3b Students evaluate social, political and economic influences operating on the production of public, commercial and independent media.</p> <p>ME 6.3a Students evaluate how contextual influences can contribute to personal interpretations of media.</p>	<p>Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • investigate types of computer games familiar to them • classify games into genre categories such as: strategy, roleplay, platform/exploration, sports, quiz, combat, simulation and racing (see Support materials and references) • research the history of games from a variety of cultures • orally present to the class information about a game discovered during their research • create a modern version of a popular game from history • list and describe the technologies that deliver games to players, such as: board, cards, television, coin operated machine, video/console, hand-held console, computer, Internet, CD ROM • play a board game and compare this experience with playing its computerised version (see Teaching considerations) • discuss the development of games and the role of technological advances in the development — for example, 3D animation, scrolling, motion capture modelling and motion-sensitive data gloves as in virtual reality • play and evaluate the level of interactivity by investigating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – first or third person viewpoint available to players to explore the environment as behind or slightly above the player's control – tactile interface through joystick, voice, steering wheels, floor pedals, button presses for movements – group and solo interaction – availability of character choices or roleplay – enhanced 'feel' through force feedback such as vibrating control pad, rhythmical shuddering to resemble a heart beat, pressure sensitivity through a floor mat – visual effects such as mist, fog, darkness to heighten tension – players connected via modem or LANs • debate the statement by Topping: 'A game which is more physically realistic is thereby more aesthetically pleasing, because the properly modelled game enables us pleasure to exercise our physical intuition.' (Poole p. 63) • list and discuss the games that have been based or created in conjunction with films/TV programs, such as the Bond films or <i>A Bug's Life</i> and films/TV programs that have been produced based on a popular game — for example, <i>Mortal Kombat</i>, <i>Tomb Raider</i> and <i>Pokemon</i> • compare a sequence from a film with the game version to establish how much it has to do with the story line and to consider if it just imitates the visual style of a few scenes 	<p>ME 6.3b <i>Assessment techniques:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>teacher observation</i> • <i>focused analysis</i> <p>ME 6.3a <i>Assessment techniques:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>teacher observation</i> • <i>focused analysis</i>

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Outcomes	Media activities	Gathering evidence
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify elements shared by games and films: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – introductory video sequence with fast cutting and strange camera angles – stock character types, overexaggerated physiques – realistic/fantasy environment as in horror, sci fi and action films – filmic language of camera angles, shots, movement, music, sound effects, point of view – physical animation, such as acrobatic movements – transitions between shots and scenes – musical soundtracks which are a compilation of licenced pop tracks or a specially composed score – sound effects which contribute to the realism – use of horror, action and science fiction conventions such as monsters, car chases and space dogfights • identify the elements that exist in games that are not in film: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – navigation through layers and pathways – narrative options and possibilities for the audience – menu – status bars to indicate ammunition, characters' health – power ups represented as objects, such as health restoring devices, medikits – interactivity such as character choice – tiny 'cells' of music a few bars long that, within the game, change with the mood or fictional content, for example, providing information that the player can act on – 'follow cam' and 'cockpit cam' in driving or flying films – 'aerial cam' — point of view from great height – replays — cutting together of different viewpoints • analyse a computer game using Student resource 1 • identify games that include consequences for characters' actions and discuss how realistic these are • discuss the values promoted by games, particularly war strategies and 'shoot em ups' • explore the future of games, considering technological developments in virtual reality and artificial intelligence • imagine the future of games and make predictions about the types of games that may exist and how people might play them • develop criteria and debate which company produces the best games, Sony or Nintendo • collaboratively demonstrate a game and present an analysis of the game that considers many of the discussion points raised in previous activities. 	

Teaching considerations:

All material should be checked before being presented to students, because the texts may contain language or images that are offensive and inappropriate for students. Be aware that some students may not have access to media texts due to cultural, socioeconomic circumstances or religious beliefs. If appropriate, it may be necessary to make media texts available to individual students and familiarise them with the relevant media forms, or to consider alternative ways that individual students can explore the media concepts and demonstrate the learning outcomes.

Most games have objects that have a three-dimensional picture of their referents, which operate also as symbols. They are not usually given realistic physical attributes, for example in Tomb Raider a door operates as a symbol for 'exit' or 'threshold', a means of policing movement between pre-defined spaces.

Motion capture modelling is a technique where real people are filmed and the movement is digitised as movement codes that can be applied to imaginary game characters.

Consider resources for students with vision impairment. There are now online games being designed specifically for both blind and sighted players. They make effective use of visuals and sound effects to create the artificial world and there is full speech accessibility for non-sighted players. Also consider adaptive technologies that will allow students with physical impairments to manipulate joysticks and keyboards for playing games.

Phase 2 — Who's in control?

Students:

- research the players and sites of electronic games
- produce marketing for a game concept.

Outcomes	Media activities	Gathering evidence
<p>ME 6.3b Students evaluate social, political and economic influences operating on the production of public, commercial and independent media.</p> <p>ME 6.3a Students evaluate how contextual influences can contribute to personal interpretations of media.</p>	<p>Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conduct research to investigate the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Who plays which computer games? – What sites and platforms are being used to play the games? (for example, arcades, home computer, consoles) – How much time is spent playing the games? – What genres are popular? – When and for how long are the games played? – How much money is spent on games and by which people? • examine their own findings and read articles to explore questions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Which games appeal to particular demographic groups? – Do some boys spend more time playing computer games than some girls? Why might this be? – Are there negative effects for children who spend long amounts of time playing computer games? If so, what are they and who makes this claim? What is the basis for agreeing with this position? • investigate the communities that are formed around particular games through official websites, magazine subscriptions, chat lines and list servers • identify which characters and their features are most easily recognised by various groups in society, such as Sonic the Hedgehog, Lara Croft, Pikachu and the Mario Brothers • conduct a class debate on an issue, such as censorship of video games, the negative portrayal of women or the catharsis argument • research issues and record interviews with other students in role, to explore an issue surrounding computer games — for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – addiction to playing games – Nintendo versus Sony – excessive playing and violent behaviour • visit a game arcade (for example, Time Zone), if appropriate, and analyse the game environment by observing and recording player gender, playing time, playing space, game genres, etc. • explore marketing strategies for gender-specific games and describe the techniques that suggest that a game is being targeted at one gender and not the other • compare the different marketing strategies by the two big-name manufacturers, Sony and Nintendo: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What image do they project of their company, their games and their consoles? – Who is their target market? – How do they distinguish themselves from other products in the market? • research the game industry in Queensland by inviting speakers from companies such as Krome and Auron 	<p>ME 6.3b <i>Assessment technique:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>focused analysis</i> <p>ME 6.3a <i>Assessment technique:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>focused analysis</i>

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Outcomes	Media activities	Gathering evidence
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • view examples and discuss the purpose of demonstrations as introductions to games — purpose, availability, shareware, magazine offers • discuss multiplayer online games such as Diablo and how the experience of playing them differs from single-player games • script and/or produce a scene for a video where the viewer is transported into the game as in the storyline for the film <i>Jumanji</i>. 	

Teaching considerations:

Play as many different games as you can before teaching activities from this module. Games that students play at home might not be appropriate to use in educational settings, especially in relation to the portrayal of particular social, cultural and religious groups.

Be selective about which games you bring into the classroom. Consider if the program is suitable in relation to both the content and the process of playing. Consider those marketed as edutainment that use the game as a facility to teach students something. Select games you think are appropriate to the analysis of the media concepts of languages, technologies and representations.

Phase 3 — Press play

Students:

- design and create a board/computer game and present a pitch to the class about their game.

Outcomes	Media activities	Gathering evidence
<p>ME 6.1 Students apply an understanding of media languages and technologies to design and create media texts in a range of production contexts.</p> <p>ME 6.2 Students apply industry strategies to promote a specific media text to various audiences.</p>	<p>Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore the collaboration involved in game development by examining the roles of concept designers, animators, 3D artists, tool developers, programmers, composers, writers and character designers • work in small groups as game designers to create a game based on the scenario in Student resource 2 or select a scene from an action film as a scenario (see Teaching considerations) • decide on the premise for the story — for example, survival, journey/quest, 'good' versus 'evil', saving the world • develop a concept map of a variety of possibilities to the action, including twists and turns to keep the player guessing, offering clues to the mission/quest • create and develop a main character and nonplayable characters — decide on a main protagonist who must accomplish specific tasks, describe laws of behaviour for each creature/character and draw sketches of them (see Teaching considerations). • select voice actors for characters and record verbal sketches • divide the narrative into levels, with each level increasingly complex or challenging — for example, a goal-based system of collecting an increasing number of items at each level in games like <i>Banjo Kazooie</i> or <i>Crash Bandicoot</i> • include elements of games, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – challenges for the character to overcome, such as hunting down hidden objects, collecting quotas of coins, surviving traps and mazes – puzzles to solve – new areas to explore – rewards such as video narrative sequences, money or prizes – alternation of cut scenes and playable action • decide on points of navigation for hypertext links and describe sample situations • design some visual spaces using a variety of visual elements: fonts, colour, animation, graphics. Consider that the user will be attracted to the elements that have <i>visual weight</i> with bold, large font, colour, icons and screen placement. • create a visual representation of a room or environment that would be useful if represented as a 3D environment in the game and would offer the player possibilities for interactivity • video a narrative sequence that would be included in the game • familiarise themselves with the software tools they are to use to transfer their ideas on to the screen with tutorials provided by the software or designed by the teacher 	<p>ME 6.1 <i>Assessment techniques:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>peer- and self-assessment</i> • <i>focused analysis</i> <p>ME 6.2 <i>Assessment techniques:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>peer- and self-assessment</i> • <i>student–teacher consultation</i>

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Outcomes	Media activities	Gathering evidence
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • design and create menu bars, tools, signs/status bars that can be used to provide feedback to the player so s/he can decide on the next action, such as indices to give instantaneous information • create symbolic images for power-ups such as maps and medical kits • select buttons or create their own (see Teacher resource 2) • design tools and navigation — buttons, icons or images such as image maps (see Teacher resource 1) • present all final design elements in a game design document • implement the design to create a three or four page site with colour images • present a pitch to other students in the class on the features of their game (see Student resource 1) and ideas for cross-media marketing. 	

Teaching considerations

Students could create their game on paper or use any available software, including Microsoft PowerPoint or shareware such as Klik and Play. Supply students with a scenario or allow students to create their own. Students could also create a board game by adapting a brochure or information kit about a social message.

Make students aware of copyright and the need to acknowledge the source of any words, sounds or images as both an ethical and legal requirement. Inform students of copyright laws and procedures for obtaining copyright releases on material. Ensure no culturally sensitive material is appropriated by students in their creation of texts.

Encourage students to create character profiles so they consider all aspects of the character and are better able to design actions in the games that are consistent with the character. Include a physical, social and psychological profile. Provide examples of the external and psychological motivation for a character to act and react according to the situation they have been put in.

When creating characters, students should be reminded of critical discussions of heroes and villains. Uncritical discussion of the heroes and villains identified by a culture inappropriately positions, marginalises and excludes some groups of students — those from groups who are not represented as 'heroes' or who may be over-represented as 'villains'. In Australia, those marginalised or excluded in this way tend to be:

- girls and women
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- people from Aboriginal backgrounds or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds
- people from low socioeconomic backgrounds
- people who may be disfigured/disabled in some way.

Unquestioning acceptance of what a hero is and does and what a villain is and does will not develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and processes necessary to question how disadvantage has developed and is maintained within social structures, or to challenge rather than accept social injustice.

Phase 4 — Reality TV or just another game people play?

Students:

- analyse reality TV programs and their relationship with other TV genres
- develop concepts for a reality TV program.

Outcomes	Media activities	Gathering evidence
<p>ME 6.3b Students evaluate social, political and economic influences operating on the production of public, commercial and independent media.</p> <p>ME 6.3a Students evaluate how contextual influences can contribute to personal interpretations of media.</p>	<p>Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • research the popularity of reality TV shows in their communities, such as <i>Big Brother</i>, <i>Survivor</i>, <i>Treasure Island</i>, <i>The Mole</i>, <i>Supermodels</i> and <i>Popstars</i> • construct a board game based on the 'Survivor' structure, set in a familiar environment, such as the school, selecting characters and inventing obstacles for characters to overcome • discuss the attraction for networks: low production costs, high ratings, fits with Australian content regulations, cross-media and cross-marketing potential • compare the costs for producing a reality program with a high-rating drama production • discuss the term 'reality television' and how 'real' the recorded situations are in various programs, as well as the effects on participants or viewers • discuss issues about censorship and codes of ethics involving contestants' privacy and exploitation • investigate the use of technologies to create the effect of 'reality': multi-camera set-up, live recording, handheld digital video, laptops in car races, big screens, diary rooms, confessions, talk to camera shots, compare as interviewer and commentator • use relevant questions on the game analysis sheet to analyse a reality TV program (see Student resource 1) • script the next episode for a reality program currently showing on TV • compare the 'contestants' with characters in a game and comment on the use of stereotypical physical features and the construction of character 'type' through editing and publicity — for example, the clown or the loud mouth • discuss the role of the viewer and the tools for interactivity with the 'game' — for example, the <i>Big Brother</i> eviction nights at Dreamworld, telephone/online voting, auctions, fan websites, chat rooms • consider how the conventions of the program draw the viewer to empathise and connect with the characters — for example, confiding with the audience, using direct to camera shots, voyeuristic appeal through the lens of hidden cameras, interviews with close family and friends of contestants • reflect on their own opinions of reality programs and evaluate the factors that influence their personal interpretations — for example, family values, personal experiences, peer reactions, identification with characters, publicity surrounding the programs • consider industry issues surrounding the influences of reality programs, including absence of script development, work for actors and production crews 	<p>ME 6.3b <i>Assessment techniques:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>teacher observation</i> • <i>focused analysis</i> <p>ME 6.3a <i>Assessment technique:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>student–teacher consultation</i>

This table is continued on the next page...

Outcomes	Media activities	Gathering evidence
<p>ME 6.1 Students apply an understanding of media languages and technologies to design and create media texts in a range of production contexts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • view an episode and list all the genre conventions they identify — for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – cliff hangers at the end of each episode – soap opera close-ups and mid shots – current affair style interviews with ‘contestants’ and experts – documentary cinema verite style camera shots – elimination of contestants and physical challenges from games shows and sporting programs • discuss the blending of genres in a reality TV program compare the conventions used by reality programs with those of soap opera: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – small group of characters – fixed location with either natural challenges or constructed ones – physically appealing characters – big intro — dramatic music, flashback to previous episodes, and teasers around advertisement breaks 	<p>ME 6.1 <i>Assessment technique:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>peer- and self-assessment</i>
<p>ME 6.2 Students apply industry strategies to promote a specific media text to various audiences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compare the conventions used by reality programs with those of game shows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – money and winning as motivation – competition between contestants and game rules – the role of the host/presenter as nice/nasty – escape from reality for players and audience – interactivity — audience vote • trace the development of the style of programs from documentaries like <i>Seven Up</i> and soapumentaries such as <i>Sylvania Waters</i>. • design a new concept for a reality program for family viewing, providing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – a treatment and character profiles – goal of the contestants – setting/environment – obstacles and challenges – rewards – rules of the show – audience interaction with the program – number of participants • video a sequence from the first episode of the series • record a trailer/teaser for their program • design and produce a marketing campaign to launch the new show, involving cross-media marketing and promotion • present a pitch for the program (see Student resource 3). 	<p>ME 6.2 <i>Assessment techniques:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>peer-assessment</i> • <i>focused analysis</i>

Teaching considerations

During any season of a reality television program being broadcast, articles and letters to the editor abound. See the website www.sirlinksalot.net/realitytelevision.html for articles from around the world about reality TV. Consider censorship classifications and programming times before encouraging students to view them. Tape broadcasted episodes or purchase video recordings and show selected sequences to students for analysis. Remind students of classification regulations for the design of their own programs.

Broadcast programs and films that feature stories or themes about reality television include:

A Current Affair (Channel 9)
Today Tonight (Channel 7)
Foreign Correspondent (ABC)
Four Corners (ABC)
The Truman Show (Peter Weir, 1998).

Designing web buttons

Teacher resource 1

Description/explanation:

- Topic:** Designing web buttons for a web page
- Objective:** Students combine and manipulate media languages and technologies to construct intended meanings.
- Resources:** A computer connected to the internet and lots of pictures, graphics, symbols, icons, objects, sounds and scissors, glue, pens, paper, tape/CD player and resource sheets.

Sequence and timing of learning experiences:

LESSON ONE

Engage and orientate

1. Show students a range of web button texts that have been designed for different web pages. Note the different textures, sounds, colours and overall look/impact of the buttons.
2. Discuss why they might be different. Introduce concepts such as audience, purpose and context. Identify the possible conventions and codes associated with a web button text.

Explore and enhance

1. Provide access to a computer (ideally a classroom lab) and ask students to investigate a number of different web pages that have very different purposes and audiences. Ask them to identify any common features (conventions) and make notes about creative or successful button designs.

LESSON TWO

Explain

1. Clarify why buttons are an important aspect in the design of a web page, expand on the conventions and codes and reiterate key considerations that relate to the design brief, the purpose of web buttons and the business and production context of the task.
2. Discuss how web buttons are produced and show students the above materials. Explain how they will use these to stimulate brainstorming on ways of designing and creating a suitable web button text.

Elaborate and synthesise

1. Establish a roleplay where students become part of a design team that has been given a brief for creating a company's web page.
2. Divide into small groups to each design a web button. Give materials to each group.
3. Hand each group an information sheet that identifies the company's emblem/logo and describes its business and marketing image. Ask groups to discuss this information and make decisions about how it will impact on their web button design.
4. Students then collaborate to produce a written proposal, which shows a sketch/template/model (that uses some of the materials) of their web button text and that explains the reasons for their decisions.

LESSON THREE

Evaluate

1. Ask each group to share its design proposal while the rest of the class provides feedback about the success of the design for each company's brief (brainstorm criteria for selection on board).
2. Select the most effectively designed web button and explain why its features best meet the design brief in terms of its consideration of the conventions and codes, the purpose and context of the task.

Extend

1. Individually, students modify their group's design based on the feedback provided in class.
2. They write a reflection on what they have learnt about the media languages involved in web button design and construction (provide a guided reflection sheet to both highlight to the student what has been learnt and to capture the student's level of understanding).

Investigating games

Student resource 1

Game evaluation

Student's name:

Name of the game:

The game is created or distributed by:

The previewing stage

1. What is the classification or warning for the game?
2. Describe the packaging and marketing surrounding the game.
3. Analyse the introduction/trial to the game.
4. What expectations do you have after viewing the introduction/package and marketing? Why?
5. What platform is the game designed to be played with/on?
6. What technological tools are needed to play the game? Is it controlled by mouse, key pad, joystick, Playstation Dual Shock Control, Wingman Game Pad Extreme (tilt sensor), voice-activation, in-game save, players connected via modem or LANs?

Playing the game

1. What genre/s does the game belong to — for example, strategy, sports, roleplay, exploration?
2. Is the game based on any media text, such as a film or television program?
3. What is the main theme of the game — for example, triumph, fear?
4. What is the goal of the game? Is it based on real life or fantasy?
5. Describe your favourite design features. Explain why.
6. Identify the design features which annoy or frustrate you. Explain why.
7. How realistic is the game?
8. How believable are the characters?
9. Critique the use of gender and cultural stereotypes for the characters.
10. From whose perspective is the game being played? Are you a participant or observer? Consider camera angles and viewpoint.
11. Comment on the level of interactivity. Describe the features available and their limitations.
12. How believable is the game world? Analyse how real the game is by evaluating character movement and capabilities, character's ability to survive extreme violence, blows and health correlations, number of lives, types of actions the programmers have allowed.
13. What features are included to make the experience more real? How convincing is the movement/dynamics of characters or creatures? What options do you have to take different pathways or develop new characters?
14. How well designed is the navigation? What prior knowledge do you need to play the game?
15. Comment on the visual design and layout. Does it emphasise a horizontal, vertical or centred organisational pattern, or a combination of these? What use is made of icons and symbols — for example, doors, keys, health bars, coloured tones, medikits, power ups, switches, paintings, gadgets and sniper rifle telescopic zoom?
16. Comment on the use of audio effects and music, such as themes.
17. Describe the audience you think this game has been created for.

Reviewing the game

1. Did the game meet your expectations?
2. What other games is it like?
3. Does it introduce new techniques or experiences?
4. Who would you recommend play this game?

Computer game workshop

Student resource 2

Workshop outline

Participants will be required to create a scenario for the year 2020 that includes a quest (see gameplan). The outcome is to be a design for a computer game that they will continue to work on after the workshop. They will learn skills for storyboarding a script that has optional outcomes, branching off from a crisis point in the scenario where the player is confronted with choices that have consequences (setting, characterisation, plot etc.). Each participant will create a character that will be an avatar (representation of themselves in the virtual world), as well as contribute to visualisation of the settings and promotional material. These will be presented to the whole group at the end of the day.

Workstation approach

Visualisation will be via 2D & 3D media & digital workshops.

Processes and options

Work in small groups to devise a scenario in response to gameplan. Begin with rough visualisation of setting and characters and interface style. Skills development will include cartooning (drawing and painting) and animation (could include assemblage and modelling — sets/characters in reverse garbage or clay). These could be photographed with a digital camera for presentation, or participants could take photos of self/others as the basis for the avatars that they will ultimately create.

Components of a game plan

The story and goal

- scenario/quest
- problems to be overcome
- things that help the player to achieve the goal
- things that prevent the player from achieving the goal
- strategies for the best way to achieve the goal

Main menu

- beginning the game
- getting help for when the player is stuck
- checking progress score
- quitting the game
- saving partly finished games
- starting up new games

Player controls

- functions
- attributes of actions
- relevance to game
- status bar

Gameplay fundamentals

- goals for each scenario
- problems to be overcome
- choices
- tasks required to accomplish goals
- limitations/hindrances to goal achievements
- bonus/demerit points — tally screen
- checkpoints (go to; go back to)
- escape

Proposed story and goal

It is the year 2020. Up until this time the inhabitants of your planet have generally always had the same vision for the future of their world, but have always disagreed about how to get there. This has led to environmental and social devastation. Society is split in two and it seems that the vision can never be achieved. The time has come for the two sides to compromise or lose all hope of having their preferred future world. They have each decided to describe this future world and to map out a pathway to get there. The group's task is to visualise and describe this future world, and to decide on one scenario for getting there. This will involve anticipating threats that will prevent the player achieving the goal of a harmonious thriving planet, and giving a symbolic visual form to them. It will also involve inventing special powers that will help the player overcome the problems, and giving symbolic visual form to these powers.

Sample pitch task**Student resource 3****Introduction**

A reality television program could be described as a dramatic, soap-opera-like TV show that follows real people in real or artificial contexts for a period of time. Reality TV can have a game show element or it can have different casts from week to week, but it has to focus primarily on the human drama that results from the situation the cast members are in.

Task

Assume the role of a producer who is pitching a concept for a new reality television program targeting a youth audience to an executive of a production studio or television network.

Your new series must:

- clearly reflect a variety of **representations** of aspects of contemporary Australian life and culture, including alternative representations to those traditionally evident on TV
- reflect an understanding of **audience** impact and youth expectations.

Develop your pitch and deliver it as an oral presentation for assessment. Your audience will be your teacher and peers in role as the institution's (studio/network) executive producers. Use video, OHTs and/or other audiovisual media to create interest and clarification of your concept in the presentation.

Step One

Decide on a particular scenario — view examples that are currently on television. Analyse the examples with regard to how they would shape audience expectations, and the kinds of representations evident regarding Australian life and culture. Also evaluate audience impact (use a **survey/research** to justify the decisions you make about the show's format, content and scheduled timeslot/frequency/channel/network).

Step Two

Develop your own **concept outline for a new reality TV show** and write a **synopsis for the pilot episode**. Identify the kinds of representations you can develop through consideration of:

- target audience and its expectations
- program title/opening credits sequence
- overall concept (setting, characters/presenters, themes)
- format for pilot episode.

Step Three

Prepare your pitch — use all your information from Steps 1 and 2. Structure your pitch carefully. Consider how you could utilise any video footage from existing programs, OHTs and other audiovisual media to enhance the impact of your presentation.

Conditions

Summative, individual:

- *Length:* 3–5 minutes (including 1.5 minutes audiovisual materials)
- *Preparation:* approximately 7 x 50 minute lessons and 2 weeks of the students' own time
- *Audience:* Studio/network executive producers

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Years 1 to 10 The Arts Syllabus

Years 1 to 10 The Arts Sourcebook Guidelines

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